



GULF REGION MARINE CONSERVATION TARGETS UPDATE FOR FISHING INDUSTRY

No. 2

Summer 2017

Introduction

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) – Gulf Region is pleased to present the second edition of the Marine Conservation Targets update. In our efforts to continue building on the progress made to date with engagement and outreach, our commitment to improve communication approaches, we will be publishing a bi-annual newsletter on updates and actions. We encourage your organization to provide feedback about content and format as the following information is intended for you.

Mireille Chiasson – Regional Manager/ Ocean Management Division/Ecosystem Management Branch

To contribute to the national marine conservation target of 5% by end of 2017 the Gulf Region:

- ✓ Has completed an inventory of existing fisheries closures and has evaluated each of them against national criteria.
- ✓ Will make adjustments to certain existing fisheries closures to be able to contribute as ‘Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OEABCMs). For example, it is required that existing OEABCMs have clear conservation or stock management objective(s). For older closures, it may be necessary to clarify the objective(s) in DFO documentation.
- ✓ Will establish new fisheries conservation measures such as fisheries closures to protect sensitive sponges and corals that fall within the estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence Bioregion.

To contribute to the national marine conservation target of 10% by end of 2020 the Gulf Region:

- ✓ As part of our Marine Protected Area Network planning, we will also be looking at opportunities to further study particular areas within our waters for future Marine Protected Area under the *Oceans Act* and OEABCMs consideration.
- ✓ Finalize the Marine Protected Areas Network design and start implementing.

Marine Protected Areas Network Development for the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence Bioregion

- In September 2016, the Marine Protected Area Network Strategy for the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence Bioregion was posted online (<http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/publications/mpaegsl-egslamp/index-eng.html>).
- Comments were provided on the fishing data maps during last year’s (January to March 2016) industry meetings. Since then, the maps have been modified and will be placed in a “Fishing Atlas” that will be sent out to all fisheries organizations this spring.
- Technical aspect (ecological and socio-economic analyses) for the network is nearing completion.
- We anticipate a public release of the draft network design in late 2017 which the industry will be consulted at that time. The draft network design will include priority sites for consideration as *Oceans Act* MPA and other designations (e.g. OEABCM to protect Sensitive Benthic Areas).
- It is important to note that the network design is a long term plan. Most areas will not be implemented by 2020.
- The goal is to plan to have the final design for the Marine Protected Areas Network for the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence Bioregion by 2019.

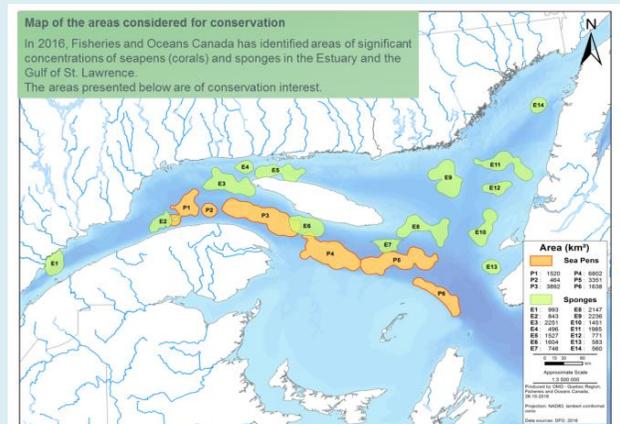
Areas of Interest

The Gulf Region has conducted initial steps towards identifying potential new Areas of Interest as part of the plan to advance the Marine Conservation Targets for 2020. While designing the Marine Protected Area Network, opportunities for sites that can meet the network objectives and be designated by 2020 will be explored. Continued engagement on potential areas will occur with our provincial partners, Indigenous organizations, Industry and interested parties.



Sensitive Benthic Areas/Coral and Sponge

- Implementation of the Coral and Sponge Conservation Strategy for Eastern Canada <http://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/363832.pdf> is continuing in 2017.
- In February 2017, we provided maps highlighting fishing activities in reference to areas with high concentrations of sea pens (corals) and sponges in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence. Meetings and consultations for those maps have now concluded.
- Meetings took place during the Snow Crab Advisory Committee meeting in Moncton on March 2nd and again during the Groundfish Advisory Committee meeting on March 23rd. The information gathered during the consultations will help DFO select the coral and sponge areas to conserve while minimizing the economic impact on fishing activities.
- An announcement will be made in 2017 on the coral and sponge conservation measures that will be implemented for the beginning of the 2018 fishing season.
- The coral and sponge conservation measures will be included in the Marine Protected Area Network (MPAN) and will contribute to meet Canada's commitments to increase the amount of protected marine and coastal areas.



Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OEABCM)

- As part of the 5% target for 2017, Gulf Region assessed its existing Area-Based Management Measures (e.g., fisheries closures) against a set of criteria that were developed (<http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/publications/oeabcm-amcepz/index-eng.html>) following a national peer-reviewed process (<http://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/365364.pdf>).
- Following this assessment, it has been determined that further consideration is necessary before a final list of measures is established. Results of this exercise will be communicated to all interested parties when completed.
- On June 8th, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard announced a first round of OEABCM. In the Gulf Region, we include the scallop buffer zones 21, 22 and 24. These buffer zones protect juvenile lobster and its habitat.

Legislative Changes to the *Oceans Act*

- An important element of the Government's plan to meet these marine conservation targets is to examine how the *Oceans Act* can be updated to facilitate the designation process for marine protected areas, without sacrificing science, or the public's opportunity to provide input.
- The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is working with the Department of Justice on a bill to amend the *Oceans Act* which would provide an additional mechanism for DFO to designate Marine Protected Areas. To complement this initiative, proposed amendments to the *Canada Petroleum Resources Act* (CPRA) are also being proposed.
- One of the primary aims of the proposed amendments is to create a new authority that will enable the designation of Interim Protection (IP) MPAs through a Ministerial Order. This would provide interim protection for an area before a Governor in Council (GiC) regulation is established to support the long-term management of the MPA.
- The IP MPA would designate initial MPA boundary based on preliminary science and consultations and "freeze the footprint" of current activities, meaning that ongoing activities continue, new activities are prohibited, and some ongoing activities regulated under federal fisheries legislation may be restricted further. The Department would then have five years to designate the permanent MPA through Governor in Council (GiC) regulation based on additional science and consultations.



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